VI. CLAIMS

1. A nutcracker system comprising in combination:

a base having a bottom interconnecting two similar sides, a back and a front all interconnected with each other to define an open top base chamber, said front having a medial slot extending vertically therethrough;

at least one spacer having a peripheral configuration to fit in immediate adjacency with the vertical sides of the base defining the base chamber, said at least one spacer defining a medial cracking chamber orifice and having a tab-like protuberance extending outwardly from the periphery to fit in and through the slot defined in the front of the base; and

a striker plate having a plate-like body defining a lower substantially planar surface, having at least one dimension greater than the greatest dimension of the cracking chamber orifice defined in the at least one spacer and carrying a medially positioned upwardly extending handle to aid manual manipulation of the striker plate to impact upon the upper surface of the at least one spacer.

2. The nutcracker system of Claim 1 further including:

a bottom plate formed of a planar sheet of hard rigid dense material and having a peripheral configuration to fit on the upper surface of the bottom and in immediate adjacency to the base sides defining the chamber base.

3. The nutcracker system of Claim 1 wherein the at least one spacer comprises a plurality of substantially similarily peripherally configured spacers defining similar cracking chamber orifices that in a stacked array of more than one spacer define a cracking chamber of adjustable vertical dimensions.

4. The nutcracker system of Claim 1 wherein the at least one spacer defines a cracking chamber having a depth of from eighty percent to ninety percent of the average vertical dimension of a batch of nuts carried within the cracking chamber to allow cracking of the nuts by impact of the striker plate thereon.

5. The nutcracker system of Claim 1 wherein the striker plate is formed of hard rigid dense metallic material and the

striker plate body has a peripheral configuration similar to but areally larger than the cracking chamber defined by the at least one spacer but less than the bottom to fit within the chamber defined by the base and extend spacedly beyond the periphery of the cracking chamber.

6. The nutcracker system of Claim 1 further having:

a waste container with a lateral dimension greater than the lateral dimension of the medial slot in the front of the base, said waste container positioned beneath the bottom of the base and extending from beneath the base spacedly forwardly thereof to receive cracked nut debris from the chamber of the base; and

a bristle brush not wider than the lateral dimension of the slot in the front of the base to aid removal of cracked nut debris from the base chamber and into the waste container.

7. The nutcracker system of Claim 6 wherein the at least one spacer comprises a plurality of similarly configured spacers of different thicknesses positionable in the chamber

of the base in stacked array to define a cracking chamber of adjustable vertical dimension.

8. A nutcracker system comprising in combination:

a base having a bottom interconnecting two similar sides, a back and a front, all interconnected with each other, to define an open top base chamber, said front having a medial slot extending vertically therethrough, and

a bottom plate formed of hard rigid dense material having a substantially planar upper surface and a peripheral configuration to fit upon the upper surface of the bottom and in immediate adjacency to inner surfaces of the back, front and sides defining the chamber;

at least one spacer having a peripheral configuration to fit on the upper surface of the bottom plate and in immediate adjacency to the inner surfaces of the back, front and sides of the base defining the base chamber, said at least one spacer defining a medial cracking chamber orifice, having a vertical dimension of from eighty percent to ninety percent of the average vertical

dimension of a batch of nuts to be carried within the cracking chamber to allow cracking of the nuts by impact of a striker plate thereon, and having a tab-like protuberance extending outwardly from the periphery to fit in and through the slot defined in the front of the base; and

a striker plate formed of hard rigid dense material and having

a lower substantially planar surface with at least one dimension greater than the greatest dimension of the cracking chamber orifice defined in the at least one spacer, and

carrying a medially positioned upwardly extending handle to aid manual manipulation of the striker plate to impact upon the upper surface of the at least one spacer and nuts carried in and projecting above the medial cracking chamber orifice of the at least one spacer.

9. The process of cracking a plurality of configurationally similar frangible shelled nuts in a cracking system having a peripherally defined open top base defining a

base chamber with a bottom supporting a hard rigid dense bottom plate and at least one spacer defining a medial cracking chamber orifice having a vertical dimension of from eighty percent to ninety percent of the average vertical dimension of a batch of nuts carried within the cracking chamber, comprising the steps of:

placing a plurality of nuts to be cracked in the cracking chamber in loosely packed array with at least some nuts in immediate contact with adjacent nuts;

manually manipulating a striker plate, formed of hard rigid dense material with a peripheral configuration smaller than the base chamber and larger than the cracking chamber orifice, from above the cracking chamber to impact on nuts projecting upwardly above the upper surface of the spacer defining the cracking chamber orifice and on the upper surface of the spacer;

removing the striker plate and the at least one spacer from the base chamber;

manually separating nut meats from shell debris in the base chamber and removing the nut meats from the base chamber;

removing the shell debris from the base chamber for

disposition to allow reuse of the base chamber.